

**Union Township Environmental Commission
Minutes of the July 10, 2007 Regular Meeting**

The July 10, 2007 Regular Meeting of the Union Township Environmental Commission was called to order.

The notice of meeting as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier-News satisfied the requirements of the Open Public Meeting Act, and was also posted in the Municipal Building, on the Union Township website and filed with the Municipal Clerk.

- I. **Roll call:** Present: Bob Beylickjian, Brian Kirkpatrick,
Robert Nargi, Stephen Hurford, Sandy Stiger
Absent: Alan Ford
Public: Frank Mazza
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** Approval of the minutes from the June 12, 2007 meeting was moved and seconded, and approved by a 5-0 vote.
- III. **Old Business:**
Ms. Stiger reported on the stream cleanup held on April 22. She reported a good turnout and a successful day, noting that Matt Severino coordinated the effort. Mr. Nargi thanked Ms. Stiger for her efforts. Mr. Nargi also noted that the time spent on this effort could be charged as in-kind service for the Sidney Brook 319 grant.
- IV. **Correspondence:** None
- V. **New Business:** None
- VI. **Chairman's Report:**
 1. Mr. Nargi provided the final version of the newsletter for UTEC, and asked for comments.
 2. Mr. Nargi reported that he is participating in the Hunterdon County Transportation Steering Committee.. This is a re-energizing of an earlier group. The studies will likely include surveys of residents and their travel patterns.
 3. Mr. Nargi noted that we had received funds from Anheuser-Busch through Mr. Mazza. These funds can be used for things like t-shirts for youth participants in stream or other township cleanups.
 4. Mr. Nargi reported that he had received drawings of the Sanctuary property to assist the Open Space committee. The town did not have a copy, and this will be provided to the town.
 5. Mr. Nargi recommended that the Environmental Commission not meet in August. It was moved and seconded, and approved by a 5-0 vote.
- VII. **Committee Reports:**
Open Space Committee:
 1. Ms. Stiger provided an outline of the process followed by Mendham Township in preparing a conservation easement inventory. She noted that when completed, each property had a folder containing information on deed restrictions, photographs and other records of easements. The study took about 5 years to complete and cost about \$10,000 (in 1997). An outside consultant performed the initial step in the study, identifying easements.
 2. Ms. Stiger mentioned several concerns about the work the committee was doing, recognizing that it was a major effort, and difficult to conduct with volunteers. Some of the concerns expressed were:
 - a. Permission to access properties
 - b. Funding. Mr. Nargi stated that grants should be available to fund this work.
 - c. Appropriateness of having volunteers search deeds and records to identify conservation easements.

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3. It was noted that some of this information is included in the township open space plan and should be reviewed, and also that the Plan is over 5 years old, and the information doesn't include all the open space properties.
4. It was noted that there are really three parts to this project:
 - a. Inventorying open space and permitted uses.
 - b. Inventorying conservation easements and educating property owners about their responsibilities in managing these easements.
 - c. Presenting this information on maps indicating uses and locations. This would include the tax map with respect to easements.
5. Ms. Stiger recommends that we engage a firm to perform the title search phase for conservation easements. A RFP will be required, and grants should be pursued.
6. An inventory of open space owned by the township, county and Watershed Association can be developed separately.

Equestrian Trails:

1. Mr. Beylickjian reported that work was continuing on developing recommendations for signage. The recommendation will include the location for the placements, including GIS information. This will need to be presented to the Township Committee, and may require county approval if any county roads are involved.
2. Concerning the preparation of a trail map, Mr. Beylickjian noted that property owners are not willing to have access to their property indicated on a map, even though the Trail Association has obtained permission. Also, on open space properties, we need to identify areas open to equestrian activities. Mr. Jost should be consulted to learn what agreements have been made with the Township regarding private property access and open space uses.
3. Mr. Beylickjian indicated that the Trail Association has obtained insurance that covers private property owners when they grant access for equestrian activities.

Planning Board:

1. Mr. Kirkpatrick reported that the Pilot hearings would be continued on July 26. Mr. Kirkpatrick noted that most approvals include a one-year window for survival.
2. Mr. Nargi noted concerns about applicants complying with all required submissions on the checklist for approved projects, and what follow-ups and inspections were in place to ensure compliance.
3. Mr. Nargi also noted concerns about non-surviving plantings in projects, and how replacement can be required, and how release of bonds can include consideration of dead plantings as part of the release review process. He noted general concerns about projects with requirements, and how escrow funds are used.

Property Management Work Group:

1. Mr. Beylickjian showed pictures of the various buildings on the Hoffman and Douglas tracts, based on visits to the properties on the Hoffman site as well as the Douglas farm.
2. Mr. Beylickjian and others mentioned several possible scenarios for the properties and building use, such as:
 - a. rehabilitating the buildings for consideration as rental properties
 - b. leasing the property for businesses, such as a corporate retreat center or an equestrian center or a bed and breakfast
 - c. subdividing and selling portions of the properties
 - d. nature or historical center
 - e. storage for township and/or county equipment
 - f. gazebo for weddings, etc.
 - g. seasonal cabins with long-term leases
3. Mr. Nargi stated that we need to meet and give recommendations to the Township Committee, especially with regard to the proposal from Mr. Hirt.
4. Mr. Nargi also noted that we could probably not subdivide and sell under the agreements by which the property was acquired, and that Mr. Jost should be consulted as to the specifics of those agreements and restrictions.

DRAFT – NOT YET APPROVED

5. Mr. Mazza noted that he has been collecting materials and photographs that pertain to the history of the Hoffman tract, and suggested we speak to Mr. Karonsky who has also collected some materials. Mr. Mazza offered his assistance with developing the plan for the property.
6. Mr. Nargi noted and Mr. Mazza affirmed that the county expects the township to maintain the buildings on the Hoffman property, and that the roof and gutters on the main house were in need of repair.
7. Mr. Kirkpatrick noted that different grasses were in the process of being planted on the tract that would provide better nesting conditions for certain birds as mowing would be delayed until the nesting season was completed.
8. The barns at the base of the hill were identified a township property. Mr. Jost should be consulted as to the status of these buildings and the surrounding fields. The house on that location is privately owned, along with 7 acres of land to the east.

Sidney Brook 319 Grant Project:

1. Mr. Nargi reminded UTEC members and the public to record time spent on this project, including time spent at meetings. Quarterly reporting is required.
2. Mr. Nargi noted that NJDEP is asking that the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) be revised to meet their requirements. The scope of the work in the original project would be expanded, and the Watershed Authority believes this to be inappropriate. The expansion would essentially require that the entire watershed area be observed, not just a limited area around the tributary streams. Property access would be a major concern. Mr. Nargi has written a letter to DEP in support of the Watershed Authority's position.
3. Mr. Nargi noted that the Watershed Authority has asked UTEC to identify potential problem areas for study. Some of the locations identified include the pond on Cook's Cross Road Finn Road Park runoff and the pond at the Sanctuary.

VIII. **Hearing of Citizens:** None

IX. **Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of the Commission will be Tuesday, September 11, 2007 at 7:00 pm at the municipal building.

X. **Adjournment:**

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. It was moved and seconded, and approved by a 5-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alan Ford, Secretary